

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An occupant side-impact protection device for a motor vehicle, the device comprising: at least one unfoldable protection element which, when unfolded, forms a curtain for protection of the head and chest region of the occupant, and a tensioning strap configured so that, when the protection element is unfolded, the strap is tensioned between a first vehicle point and a second vehicle point and forms an obstacle against which an outwardly directed rear side of the unfolded protection element is supported.
2. The device of Claim 1, wherein the tensioning strap is non-elastic.
3. The device of Claim 1, wherein the tensioning strap is connected to the protection element in a longitudinally displaceable manner via guide elements which are arranged on the outwardly directed rear side of the protection element.
4. The device of Claim 3, wherein the guide elements comprise loops which are fastened to the protection element and through which the tensioning strap runs.
5. The device of Claim 1, wherein the tensioning strap runs in a tube of fabric formed between the rear side of the protection element and a layer of fabric connected to the protection element.
6. The device of Claim 1, wherein strap is configured so that the tensioning of the tensioning strap is brought about by the protection element unfolding, the tensioning strap being connected to the protection element at at least one point.

7. The device of Claim 6, wherein the tensioning strap extends from a first fastening point via at least one deflecting device to a second fastening point.
8. The device of Claim 6, wherein the tensioning strap is connected from a first fastening point in the region of the one vehicle pillar via a first deflecting device in the region of the other vehicle pillar and a second deflecting device in the region of the roof frame to a lower region of the protection element.
9. The device of Claim 6, wherein the tensioning strap is connected from a first fastening point in the region of the one vehicle pillar via a first deflecting device in the region of the other vehicle pillar, a second deflecting device in the region of the roof frame and a third deflection provided in the protection element to a fastening point in the region of the roof frame.
10. The device of Claim 6, wherein the tensioning strap runs between a first, positionally fixed fastening point in the region of the one vehicle pillar and an essentially vertically running guide in the region of the other vehicle pillar, the tensioning strap being moved downwards along the vertical guide as the protection element unfolds.
11. The device of Claim 6, wherein the tensioning strap runs between a first, essentially vertically running guide in the region of the front vehicle pillar and a second, essentially vertically running guide in the region of the rear vehicle pillar, and, in this case, when the protection element is not unfolded, runs in the region of the roof frame and, after the protection element is unfolded, runs in a downwardly shifted position with respect to it between the two guides.
12. The device of Claim 10, wherein the guide is formed by an essentially vertically running cable or a guide rail.

13. The device of Claim 1, further comprising a return lock which prevents the tensioned strap from being released or relaxed.
14. Protection according to Claim 1, wherein the tensioning strap comprises a cable.
15. The device of Claim 1, wherein the tensioning strap is formed at least in subregions as a strap of a certain width.
16. The device of Claim 1, further comprising a release device for the manual release of the tensioning strap by a vehicle occupant.
17. The device of Claim 16, wherein the release device has a cutting element for severing the tensioning strap.
18. The device of Claim 16, wherein the release device has means for deactivating a return lock.
19. The device of Claim 16, wherein the tensioning strap comprises two sections which are connected to each other by a connecting device, the release device, when actuated, separating the connection of the two parts.
20. The device of Claim 16, wherein the release device has a securing pin by means of which the connecting device is released.
21. The device of Claim 16, wherein the release device is an element of a welded or bonded connection.
22. The device of Claim 16, wherein the release device has means for releasing a fastening point or deflecting point of the tensioning strap.

23. The device of Claim 16, wherein the release device undertakes a time-controlled release of the tensioning strap.
24. The device of Claim 1, wherein the unfolding element is an airbag or a sail.
25. The device of Claim 24, wherein the airbag has at least one essentially vertically running chamber.
26. The device of Claim 6, wherein the airbag has an essentially vertically running chamber at least in the region in which the tensioning strap is connected to the airbag.
27. The device of Claim 25, wherein the airbag has a plurality of parallel, vertically running chambers.